

France confirms finding of Titanic

PARIS (AP) — A U.S.-French expedition has located the wreck of the Titanic about 560 miles off Newfoundland, a French government institute announced Monday. The British luxury liner struck an iceberg and sank in 1912 with the loss of 1,513 lives.

The Institute for Research and Exploitation of the Sea said the wreckage, found in 13,120 feet of water, was identified by the French-made SAR submarine sonar system and American-made ARGO underwater cameras.

The Titanic, which its owners billed as unsinkable, was bound for New York on its maiden voyage when it went down on the night of April 14-15, 1912.

In its announcement, the agency said the French and American institutes sponsoring the expedition had agreed not to make public statements about the search "unless they were absolutely certain of the facts."

Sunday night, Canada's commercial television network CTV broadcast what it said was a ship-to-shore interview with Dr. Robert Ballard, an

American member of the expedition, in which he said the team found pieces of the wreck early Sunday about 360 miles south of Newfoundland. The distance he gave conflicted with that given by the French agency.

During the broadcast, Ballard said from the U.S. Navy research ship Knorr: "We came on it early this morning. It was just bang, there it was right on top of it. Our initial reaction was excitement, then a coming down off that to realize that we had found the ship where 1,500 people had died."

Ballard is associated with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Cape Cod, Mass.

The French agency did not give the precise location of the wreck, apparently for security reasons.

At the time of the disaster, the Titanic was the largest and most luxurious ocean liner ever built. The wreck is believed to contain a fortune in jewelry and diamonds.

The expedition is being sponsored by the two institutes and the National Geographic Society.